

Filed for intro on 05/08/2002

HOUSE RESOLUTION 277
By Brooks

A RESOLUTION to commemorate the 77th birthday of civil rights activist Malcolm X.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause in its deliberations and recognize those outstanding civil rights leaders who, through their exemplary efforts, struggled to realize the noble precepts of liberty and equality for all people; and

WHEREAS, one such noteworthy advocate of social justice was Malcolm X whose 77th birthday will be commemorated on May 19, 2002; and

WHEREAS, a native of Omaha, Nebraska, Malcolm Little was born to loving parents, Earl and Louis Norton Little on May 19, 1925; and

WHEREAS, his mother diligently served as a homemaker raising eight children, while his father was an outspoken Baptist minister and supporter of Black Nationalist leader, Marcus Garvey; and

WHEREAS, Earl Little, a civil rights activist, was forced to move his family twice, before Malcolm was four, to avoid persecution for his beliefs on racial equality; and

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WHEREAS, in 1929, Earl Little was killed and Louise Little suffered an emotional breakdown sometime later and was committed to a mental institution; and

WHEREAS, these tragic events forced Malcolm and his siblings to enter various foster homes and orphanages; and

WHEREAS, an intelligent and focused student, Malcolm excelled academically throughout junior high school and ranked at the top of his class; and

WHEREAS, his ambition as a young man was to become an attorney; however, this dream was short-lived, as he was told by his teachers that he could not accomplish such a goal due to his ethnicity; and

WHEREAS, due to the devastating remarks made by his teachers, Malcolm gave up his childhood dream, lost interest in school and dropped out; and

WHEREAS, after dropping out, Malcolm worked various jobs in Boston and eventually moved to Harlem, New York where, by 1942, he had committed numerous petty crimes and was directing various narcotic, gambling and prostitution rings; and

WHEREAS, in 1946, Malcolm was convicted on burglary charges and sentenced to seven years in prison; and

WHEREAS, during his incarceration, Malcolm experienced a period of self-enlightenment, where he furthered his education and converted to the Muslim religious organization, the Nation of Islam; and

WHEREAS, by the time of his parole in 1952, Malcolm had become a dedicated disciple of Islam and the teachings of Elijah Muhammad; in accord with his discipleship, Malcolm symbolically changed his last name from "Little" to "X" to signify his dissatisfaction with racial inequality and to represent his lost tribal name; and

WHEREAS, a gifted orator with natural leadership abilities, Malcolm X was appointed as a Minister and National Spokesperson for the Nation of Islam; and

WHEREAS, in addition to these responsibilities, he was called by the Nation of Islam to establish new mosques in Detroit and Harlem; and

WHEREAS, through his utilization of the media, Malcolm X was able to effectively distribute the message of the Nation of Islam to African Americans and increase its membership from 500 in 1952 to 30,000 in 1963; and

WHEREAS, during the turbulent times of the 1960s, Malcolm X was an outspoken advocate of African American rights and emerged as one of the most important leaders of the Nation of Islam and the Civil Rights Movement; and

WHEREAS, disillusioned with the leadership of the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X severed ties with the organization and created his own ministry, Muslim Mosque, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, later in 1964, Malcolm X journeyed to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, to fulfill his pilgrimage as a Muslim; and

WHEREAS, while on this journey, Malcolm X encountered Muslims from all ethnicities unified under the auspices of religion; this experience was life-changing and he decided to use his ministry to unify all ethnicities in the battle against oppression and social injustice; and

WHEREAS, his new message of acceptance angered many Nation of Islam militants and during a speaking engagement on February 21, 1965, Malcolm X was assassinated; and

WHEREAS, Malcolm X committed his entire life to ensuring that all people were afforded equal opportunities and equal treatment under the law; he served his fellow Americans with diligence, perseverance, and courage; and

WHEREAS, Malcolm X, in the midst of injustice, oppression, and hostility possessed the remarkable courage to stand for the noble precepts of equality, justice and freedom upon which our great nation was founded and the date of his birth should be commemorated; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, That we commemorate

the 77th birthday of civil rights activist Malcolm X and remember his outstanding contributions to the Civil Rights Movement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.